



Chihiro's Words

Growing up

People often talk about their youth as the best time of their lives. Women, in particular, recall wistfully the times when they were both young and beautiful. Looking back on my life, however, my youthful days never seem appealing to me. This doesn't mean I was particularly unhappy in my youth.

Apart from the war years, I lived a seemingly happy, normal life. I learned drawing and painting because I liked these activities. I also had lots of fun enjoying music and playing sports. However, I was not really aware of what my parents had to go through to support us. I thought everything was easy and dealt with everything casually. Even when I was rude to others, I did not notice it, and blindly followed others in my behavior. In retrospect, I seem so deplorably frivolous in my youth! So no matter how nice I would look in my favorite pink dresses or no matter how cute I would look in a bonnet with a lovely ribbon, I still have no desire to return to those youthful days again, let alone return to my old self, that poor artist. It would almost be like killing my present self.



Of course, I'm not saying that I'm perfect now, but I think that I'm at least in a better position than I was in those days. In order to get here, I've made steady efforts for more than 20 years, making one panic-inducing mistake after another. Little by little, I'm beginning to understand how things really are. How could I possibly want to go back to those days?

"Learn while you are young," goes a saying, "for to grow old is easy, but to learn is hard." Even in my old age, I may not find myself truly learning. Strangely enough, though, I find my purpose in life in steadily developing along with my current work. Even while having fun in my youth, I sometimes had a fleeting feeling of emptiness.

Though I was loved by my parents, there were times that I couldn't stand them because of their tiny faults. Now I am in the opposite position: I love my son, who has his youthful shortcomings (as did I when I was young); I care about my husband, who is sometimes a bother; and I want to do as much as I can for my half-paralyzed, sick mother. I think these impulses come from my becoming an adult who can get along in the world on my own. I believe that to become an adult means that you love others from the heart, no matter how much trouble they put you through.

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